# Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking

## Teacher Materials

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Produced by NW Center for Excellence in Media Literacy. Our goal is to improve the training, research, and service opportunities for both adults and teens across Washington State who are interested in media literacy education and have particular interest in addressing teen health issues from a media literacy perspective.

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# What is Media Literacy?

## Mass Communication Analysis

It is by now a cliché to say that we live in a media age. For more than twenty years we have been hearing statistics about the number of hours people spend watching TV, listening to popular music and radio. More recently we can add to this list the other hours spent at computer keyboards or in shopping malls. The point of mentioning this new arrangement of human time is not to bewail it as a bad habit, or to moan about it as time wasted, but simply to point it out as a fact.

The fact is this: young people today receive nearly all their information through popular culture - mass communication; yet schools do little to help them understand popular culture.

- We are presently living in conditions similar to those in the dark and middle ages when print literacy was limited to a very few privileged people, who consequently enjoyed power that was denied to everyone else. Most of today's population is ignorant when it comes to understanding mass communication.

- Analyzing mass communication is a set of skills essential for survival in today's society. If we do not learn to control the mass communication that dominates our world we should expect that it will (continue to) control us.

The materials presented in this manual are intended to begin to fill that gap. By offering teachers a model for teaching students the skills of media analysis, they first acknowledge the importance of mass communication in students' lives, and second, teach students how to partake in the world of mass communication.

## Media Education and Literacy

Media teachers do not deny for a moment that print literacy is important, and they give every support to the teaching of print literacy. They also point out, though, that 21st-century culture is not as strongly rooted in print as was the culture of earlier centuries. 19th and 20th Century developments of radio, film, recording, mass production and advertising, television, computers, the Internet have all impacted the culture of our time to the point where a huge proportion of the information we are exposed to is *screen-based* not paper-based; *image-based* not word-based.

The reason that reading and writing were so strongly embedded in the school curriculum in the 19th-century was that the culture at that time was almost exclusively founded in print. In a time when the base of our culture has expanded so greatly, we can not claim to be studying our culture unless we provide a prominent place in the school curriculum - beside print, not instead of it- for the kinds of literacy needed to understand the new media. The old rationale was that everyone should learn to be the master of language, or else they would be doomed to be its servants. The modern rationale merely adds the new media into the slogan beside language - not in place of language.

The skills of thinking critically about mass communication are essential survival skills in a technological, consumer society such as ours. The purpose of these materials is to assess students' abilities to think critically when analyzing mass communication. But beyond that, the experience and knowledge students acquire from their study of this material will be applicable in all subject areas, in all careers, and in their daily lives.

While using the materials presented here, students will be guided through a series of activities introducing them to skills that will enable them to think critically about media. Many terms, techniques, and concepts will be introduced. Tools to measure student understanding are provided throughout *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*.

Because these texts are contemporary, the texts will eventually become dated. Below are suggestions on how to keep your files updated:

- Have colleagues and students bring in unwanted magazines, newspapers, etc. for continuous supply of media texts.
- Try to develop the habit of clipping, taping, downloading, and filing up-to-date materials that can take the place of or supplement the ones in the manual.
- Have students perform this clipping, taping, downloading, and filing task as they encounter various samples of media texts.

Students may work individually on many of the activities or in groups. You may already use group interaction within your classroom and know what group size and composition will lead to effective groups. As always, be specific in communicating your expectations for group behavior to your students.

Feel free to:

- *Adapt the language and processes to be consistent with those already used in class*
- *Use whatever approach you feel works best in your classroom*
- *Tailor the activities to fit your students' needs*
- *Supplement the activities with your own materials and curricula*

## You Need a Conceptual Framework

A geography teacher once told me that to understand geology, a person needed to know only three things that explained everything else there was to know about the subject. These three things were the underpinnings of the subject: they formed the framework on which everything else depended.

Every subject in school needs such a conceptual framework. Teaching or learning a subject without understanding its conceptual framework is merely rote.

The conceptual framework for media education points out that media texts possess many components and include many influences.

Each text, for instance, is a unique PRODUCT, and media texts or products are the work of various media INDUSTRIES. Media texts contain values and points of view. The audience itself plays an important part in determining the meaning of the text, a process that emphasizes the importance of being aware of the values that reside within the audience as well as those that are in the text.

In Media Education, the conceptual framework is usually organized around what are called key concepts. There are many versions of these key concepts, and in each the number of key concepts presented varies from as few as four to as many as 27.

The five key concepts given in this manual are typical of the ones developed in other places such as: the Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989, *Media Literacy Resource Document* (eight key

concepts); the British Film Institute, 1991, *Secondary Media Education* (six key concepts); Len Masterman in *Teaching the Media*, 1989, (27 key concepts).

All of these sources cover the same ground in the description of Media Education:

- Media are constructions
- Media and audiences play interactive roles
- Media are (commercial) institutions
- Media contain values

These four maxims constitute the basic minimum description of a conceptual framework for studying the media. In *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*, the first of the four key concepts above has been split into two separate parts:

- All media are carefully wrapped packages
- Media construct versions of reality

In *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*, the third key concept—Media are interpreted through individual lenses—is the same as the "audience" key concept. The fourth key concept—Media are about money—is the same as the "institutions" key concept. The fifth key concept—Media promote an agenda—is the same as the "values" key concept.

Everything that is taught and everything that is learned needs to be filtered through these conceptual understandings about media.

Going back to my colleague, the geographer, the conceptual framework he offered for the understanding of geology was this:

- Friction creates heat
- Heat rises
- Water runs downhill

## Conceptual Framework for Media Education *

| | **QUESTIONS TO ASK** |
|---|---|
| MEDIA IMAGE | |
| INDUSTRY | Who's in charge? |
| | What do they want of me; why? |
| | What else do they want? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| | |
| PRODUCT | What kind of text (genre) is this? |
| | Are genre conventions followed or broken? |
| | How is this message constructed? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| | |
| AUDIENCE | Who is this intended for? |
| | What assumptions does the text make about the audience? |
| | Who am I supposed to be in relation to this text? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| | |
| VALUES | How real is this text? |
| | How/where do I find the meaning? |
| | What values are presented? |
| | What is the commercial message? |
| | What is the ideology of this text? |
| | What social/artistic/political messages does the text contain? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| | |
| PREDISPOSITION | Do I agree with (assent to) this text's message? |
| | Do I disagree with (resist) this text's message? |
| | Do I argue/negotiate with the message of this text? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| | |
| SKILLS | What skills do I need to apply to this text? |
| | How do I deconstruct/reconstruct this text? |
| | What new skills does this text demand of me? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |
| RECEIVER | |
| | What does all this mean in the end? |
| | HOW DO I KNOW? |

**WHAT REALLY COUNTS IS WHAT WE MAKE OF THE TEXT IN THE END.**
**ALL LEARNING IS AN ACT OF CONSTRUCTION.**

*Adapted by the author from ***Screening Images: Ideas For Media Education,*** **Chris M. Worsnop, Wright Communications, 1999**

## 20 Reasons to Study the Media

1. Like history, because the media interpret the past to us to show us what has gone into making us the way we are.
2. Like geography, because the media define for us our own place in the world.
3. Like civics, because the media help us to understand the workings of our immediate world, and our individual roles in it.
4. Like literature, because the media are our major sources of stories and entertainment.
5. Like literature, because the media require us to learn and use critical thinking skills.
6. Like business, because the media are major industries and are inextricably involved in commerce.
7. Like language, because the media help define how we communicate with each other.
8. Like science and technology, because the media always adopt the leading edge of modern technological innovation.
9. Like family studies, because the media determine much of our cultural diet and weave part of the fabric of our lives.
10. Like environmental studies, because the media are as big a part of our everyday environment as are trees, mountains, rivers, cities and oceans.
11. Like philosophy, because the media interpret our world, its values and ideas to us.
12. Like psychology, because the media help us (mis)understand ourselves and others.
13. Like science, because the media explain to us how things work.
14. Like industrial arts, because the media are carefully planned, designed and constructed products.
15. Like the arts, because the media bring us pleasure, and we experience all the arts through the media as no other age has ever done.
16. Like politics, because the media bring us political and ideological messages all the time - yes - all the time.
17. Like rhetoric, because the media use special codes and conventions of their own languages that we need to understand and control—or we stand in danger of being controlled by them.
18. Like drama, because the media help us understand life by presenting it as larger-than-life, and compel us to think in terms of the audience.
19. Like Everest, because they are there.
20. BECAUSE THE MEDIA GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO STUDY US.

# How to Use this Manual

This set of teacher materials is meant to accompany the student workbook for *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*, providing instructions, notes and recommendations for each section. But before you begin, you may want to peruse the following materials for suggestions on how to incorporate *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* into your subject, curriculum, learning requirements, and classroom.

## Overview of *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*

The following is an extended overview of the materials presented in this manual. While they are presented in a given order, local needs and preferences might dictate that teachers customize their use of these materials.

- ***Taking a Second Look*** is the ability to see more in a text than is at first apparent. By studying the texts in this section, students will learn that texts have more than a single level or meaning and that audiences can reap rewards from learning how to discover the second and possibly even third or fourth levels of meaning in media literacy texts.

- ***Media Texts Have Purposes and Target Audiences*** introduces some purposes of media texts. A media text is first developed with a broad purpose in mind (such as the ones below). Once a target audience is determined, the purpose becomes more specific. It is important to understand the impact the target audience has on the purpose of the media text.

  Examples of broad purposes are:
  - to persuade
  - to entertain
  - to inform
  - to explain
  - to profit

- "The Five Key Concepts of Media Literacy through Critical Thinking" carefully explores each concept in turn with sample texts, activities, and assessment tools. A separate collection of texts and activities helps students explore some mass communication purposes and techniques. Each key concept has been developed so it can either be used to build on previously learned key concepts or be studied individually.

  The five key concepts in media literacy through critical thinking are as follows:

  ***Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages.***
  As carefully wrapped packages, the messages are "wrapped" with enormous effort and expense, even though they appear quite natural to the audience. Media texts are the product of careful manipulation of constructive elements, both on an obvious and a subtle level. On an obvious level, constructions such as drawings, colors, and headlines may be used. But on a subtle level, constructions such as appeals (generalization appeal or

appeal to emotion) may be used. Students of mass communication need to develop the skills of looking beneath the surface of media messages to see how they are constructed.

***Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality.***
Audiences tend to accept media texts as natural versions of events and ideas, when, in fact, they are only representations of events and ideas. The reality we see in media texts is a constructed reality, built for us by the people who made the media text. Students of mass communication need to develop skills of interpreting texts so that they can tell the difference between reality and textual versions of reality.

***Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses.***
Audiences interact with media texts in idiosyncratic ways. Some audiences accept some messages totally at face value. Other audiences may reject the same text, disagree with its message, or find it objectionable. Yet other audiences, not certain if they have embraced or rejected the text, will try to come to terms with it by negotiating. Audiences who negotiate with a text might ask questions, seek out other people's opinions, or try different interpretations or reactions the way people try on new clothes-- to see how they suit the wearer. Students of mass communication need to be open to multiple interpretations of texts and aware that a reaction to a text is a product of both the text itself and all that the audience brings to the text in terms of their accumulated life experiences.

***Key Concept #4: Media are about money.***
1. Modern media are expensive to produce. Producers need to make back their investment by marketing their product to audiences.
2. One of the chief purposes of media is to promote consumerism. While we enjoy many of the products of media, such as magazines, we need to be aware that some media texts are created to deliver an audience to advertisers rather than to deliver texts to audiences. Others may use consumerism as a secondary motive.
3. With increasing regularity, four or five massive communications conglomerates dominate media production facilities like newspaper/book/magazine publishers and TV/film production and distribution companies. Mass communication students need to be aware of the implications of the media's commercial agenda, and how "convergence" affects the media and their contents.

***Key Concept #5: Media promote agenda.***
The very fact that some people object to some media texts is evidence that those texts contain value messages. Most media texts are targeted for an audience that can be identified by its values or ideology (belief system). Detecting the ideological and values agenda of media texts is an important skill in mass communication analysis.

> ***ALL key concepts may not be found in a given media text.*** *Just the same, some key concepts may OVERLAP in a given media text.*

- ***Practice Analyzing, Interpreting, and Evaluating Media Texts*** requires students to apply the skills they have learned to date: locating media texts and identifying connections to the media purposes, target audiences, and applying the five key concepts. At this point, students will practice the interpretive skills they will need to complete the final project.

- ***Final Project*** will be the final summary assessment of the work and learning done in the manual. The students will produce an oral and visual presentation in which they perform a detailed analysis of a text they have chosen. This final project is assessed on three levels:

    1) *quality of the analysis of the media text* (EALR 4.3)

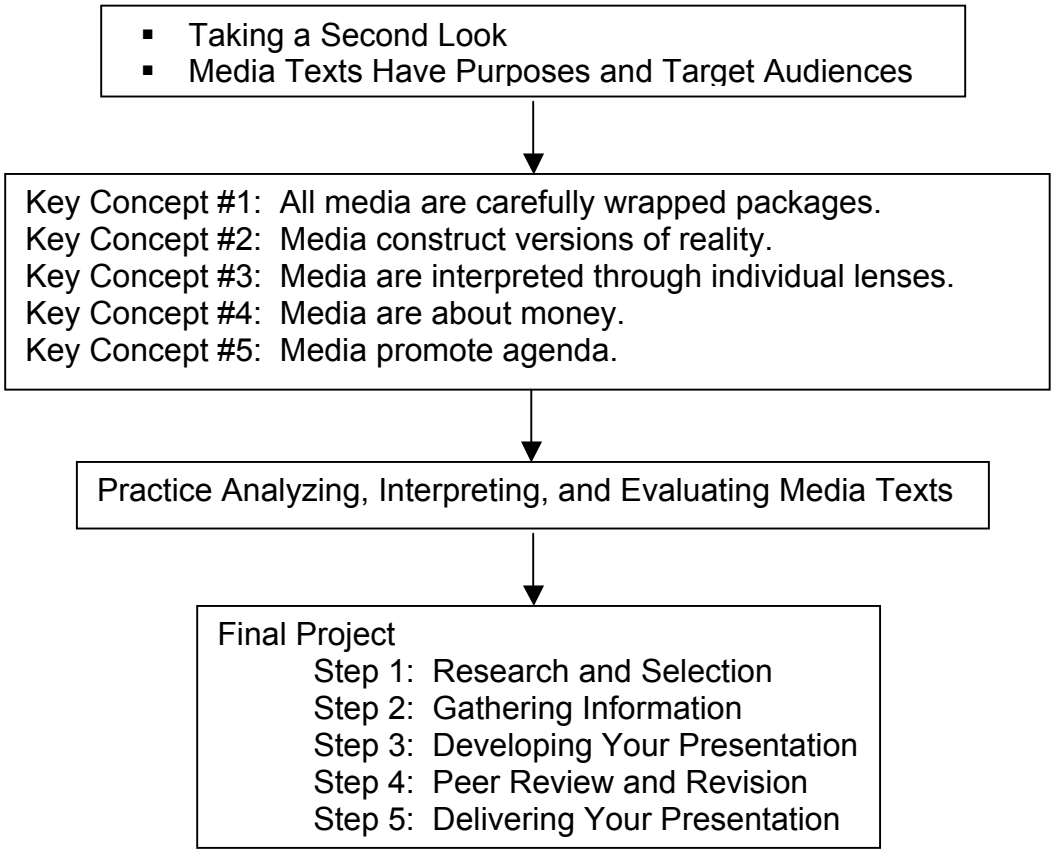
    2) *quality of the presentation* (EALR 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

    3) *quality of the visual product* (EALR 2.2, 2.5)

In *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*, students are introduced to five key concepts of media education. To explore other organizational schema of the same concepts, see the Appendix for *The Eight Key Concepts of Media Education* (TM p.54), or *Media Education: Eighteen Basic Principles* (TM p.58).

## Graphic Overview of *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking*

Below is a graphic overview of the materials presented in this manual. As students follow the arrows, they will see the progression of skills needed to analyze mass media. The final assessment project gives students an opportunity to demonstrate the skills they've learned.



## Models for Classroom-Based Evidence of Student Learning

The Washington Models for Classroom-Based Evidence of Student Learning are an important part of the Washington state assessment system. As part of the Classroom-Based Assessment Tool Kit, they provide a model for:

- Understanding the Essential Academic Learning Requirements
- Recognizing the characteristics of quality work that define the standards in communication

### General Definition of Models

Washington Models for Classroom-Based Evidence of Student Learning provide teachers with:

- Tools to organize, collect, and assess student work
- Examples of classroom tasks that are tied to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements, including some that are difficult to assess at the state-level, or are more appropriately addressed in the classroom

### Content of the Models

Classroom-based evidence models of student learning provide information from interviews, presentations, work products, or exhibitions of student work collected over a week, a month, or the entire school year. The models include:

- Paper and pencil tasks
- Rubrics
- Rating scales
- General checklists of strategies
- Observation assessment strategies
- Generic protocols for oral communications

Teachers may also use these models to create high quality assessments that reflect student progress toward the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and make decisions about the instructional programs offered to students. Media Literacy Standards for 48 states are available at http://www.med.sc.edu:1081/statelit.htm.

## Media Performance Across the Curriculum

While these models for classroom-based evidence of student learning offer suggestions for instruction, they do not prescribe specific teaching methods. Instead, they encourage teacher choice and creativity.

One of the major purposes of this curriculum is to convince teachers that students might present their performance in any subject area in any one of hundreds of formats or media. It is my belief that one of the reasons this has not been much encouraged in the past is that teachers have felt uneasy about assessing the work students might present to them in non-traditional formats and media. I believe too that having instruments for assessing media work can make all the difference.

Here is a partial list of alternative formats and media, quoted from pages 60-61 of my book, *SCREENING IMAGES: Ideas for Media Education* (Wright Communications, 1999).

"Instead of asking always for an essay, teachers could consider the following alternative formats for student reporting - almost 200 of them. The media are part of all learning."

abstract
ad campaign
adaptation
address
advertisement
animation
announcement
anthology
autobiography
bibliography
bill board
biography
brainstorming
brochure
calculation
campaign
caption
cartoon
cartoon strip
character sketch
chart
collage
column
commercial
costume
crossword
cut-line
debate
dedication
definition
demonstration
design
desk-top publishing
diagram
dialog
diary
diorama
directions
directive
discussion
display
docudrama
drama
drawing
editorial
electronic mail
epigram
epitaph
*ESSAY*
eulogy
executive summary
ezine
fashion design
fiction
film
filmography
foreword
game
graffiti
graph
greeting card
guest speaker
guidebook
guidelines
handbill
handbook
headline
horoscope
how-to guide
improvisation
inscription
instructions
interpretation
interview
introduction
invitation
invoice
job description
joke
journal article
journal
label
lecture
letter to the editor
letter list
log
magazine
manual
map
memoir
memorandum
menu
message
mime
minutes
model
monolog
music
news report
news article
newsletter
newspaper
note making
note taking
one-sheet
organizer
painting
pamphlet
parable
paragraph
paraphrase
periodical
photo-montage
photograph
play
plot diagram
poem
postcard
poster
précis
preface
problem solving
profile
program
project
prologue
proposal
prospectus
publishing
puppetry
puzzle
query
quest
question list
question
questionnaire
quiz
quotation
radio report
receipt
recipe
report
research paper
resource list
résumé
review
riddle
role-play
routing slip
saying
scenario
script
semantic organizer
sign
simulation
skit
slogan
sociogram
song
speech
statement
story board
story-telling
story-writing
summary
survey
table
tableau
telegram
test
title
transformation
travelog
treatment
trip
uniform
video
visit
visitor
viva voce
waybill
website
word search
word-we

## Cross-Curricular Connections: Media Education and Media Savvy

Media education lessons are lying all around us, offering themselves to our eyes, ears and brains for no more effort than it takes to pick them up, look them over and take them into class. Think about it. Is there a media lesson for you:

- In the debate that goes on in families over who holds the remote control for the TV at viewing time, or over who decides which channel to watch?
- In studying the styles people of different ages and backgrounds adopt when they watch TV? (E.g. surfing, planning in advance, watching while reading, sleeping through three-quarters of the program, etc.)
- In the way different individuals approach the activity of shopping?
- In the way teachers joke with each other about the use of the VCR as "a Friday afternoon thing"?
- On the drive home each day as you pass hundreds if not thousands of signs, symbols and advertising images each calling out for a part of your conscious attention?
- In the way the students in your class choose their clothes, present themselves through makeup and hairstyles, adopt a loyalty to a style of popular music, etc.?
- In the way you read your newspaper in the morning? Watch the TV news at night? Conduct conversations with your friends each day about items you have each been exposed to in the media?
- In listing the books that are (or are not) on your personal bookshelves?
- In the things you, your family and friends choose to collect?

Perhaps the reason more teachers do not take advantage of these free-for-the-taking lessons is that they feel they have not been trained to be media teachers as they were trained to teach geography, reading, or multiplication. But lack of training does not have to be a drawback. It might be OK for us to approach media as an area for constant investigation, exploration and discovery. After all, there are few parts of our world that shift and change as fast as the media.
It would be very difficult to create a definitive body of knowledge about media education that would not be out of date before it got into print. Maybe we can afford sometimes to allow the students to be in the know when we are in the dark; to be the experts when we are the neophytes; to be the leaders while we do some following.

Instead of focusing on the fast-shifting content and knowledge of media, we could use media as a way of engaging students in working on outcomes that are vital to the whole curriculum. Try this list for size:

- effective communication
- problem solving
- investigation
- critical thinking
- effective use of technology
- understanding the world as a set of related systems
- collaboration
- responsible citizenship

- career education
- aesthetics

Media education can be used as an ideal way of integrating the content of traditional subject areas, or of casting a new light on a traditional subject area:

- The language teacher might be interested in having students analyze different newspapers and their articles to understand which ones are written in the most accessible, least biased, most objective language. Students could learn valuable lessons about readability, loaded vocabulary and rhetoric just by studying the newspapers: lessons that would pay off in making them not only better readers and writers, but better informed citizens, too.
- The history teacher might look not just at the events of history, but also at how historical events are reported, and how our understanding of history and current events is influenced by media—both now and in the past.
- The science teacher might be interested in helping students understand why ecological, or conservation news is hard to locate in some parts of the mainstream press.
- The family studies, guidance, or family life education teachers could teach valuable lessons simply by counting the number of males and females shown in different roles in different ways in different media. For instance, if you were to collect the front pages from a month's issues of business sections of various newspapers, how many pictures or stories would feature women? (children? people of color?) How might the sports section be different?
- The health and physical education teacher might be able to make a lesson out of the relationship between the ban on tobacco advertising and the surprising number of characters in today's TV and movies who are seen with cigarettes in their mouths and hands (even doctors).
- The music teacher might be able to investigate the influence of music TV and popular radio on students' musical taste and consumption.
- The teacher of law or civics might be able to scrape a lesson or two out of the media coverage of famous trials and the different approaches taken in different countries to media coverage of trials—and the way the public gets confused over the difference (media coverage of elections would also provide lots of material for these teachers).

The list could go on, but you get the idea, I'm sure. Media education is a friendly entree into many a traditional area of study, and a natural way of showing the connections among those areas. Modern students are just dripping with media experience, but may be lacking some of the savvy needed to make sense of the experience.

Media education is not about teaching kids how to watch TV, but about using the media to help kids make sense of the world around them, and to help them be better learners themselves.
It's about developing savvy.

# EALRs

### Links to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in Communication

In the chart below are Washington's four Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Communications, which are addressed in the *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking* Classroom-Based Evidence Model. The more detailed skills specific to Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Communication Benchmark 3 are also listed below.

A case study of an international research project on critical awareness in 16-year-old students is also available, in the Appendix (TM p.57).

### Essential Academic Learning Requirement 1: The student uses listening and observing to gain understanding. To meet this standard, the student will:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.1 focus attention | • use attention level appropriate for particular circumstances and contexts<br>• analyze and reflect on ideas while paying attention and listening in a variety of situations |
| 1.2 listen and observe to gain and interpret information | • interpret and draw inferences from verbal and non-verbal communication<br>• draw inferences based on visual information and/or people's behaviors<br>• explore different perspectives on complex issues through viewing a range of visual texts<br>• listen for, identify, and explain: information vs. persuasion, inferences, emotive rhetoric vs. reasoned arguments<br>• use a variety of effective listening strategies |
| 1.3 check for understanding by asking questions and paraphrasing | • ask questions to interpret and evaluate oral and visual contexts based on information from a variety of sources<br>• paraphrase to expand and refine understanding<br>• make judgments and inferences<br>• ask questions to refine and verify hypotheses |

**Essential Academic Learning Requirement 2: The student communicates ideas clearly and effectively. To meet this standard, the student will:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 2.1 communicate clearly to a range of audiences for different purposes | • communicate effectively with different audiences<br>• make well-chosen and varied connections between own purposes and audience interest and needs<br>• communicate for a broad range of purposes, *for example, to reflect, make inferences, interview, and influence*<br>• identify and use different forms of oral presentation |
| 2.2 develop content and ideas | • use a variety of content to convey messages to a chosen audience<br>• access and use a variety of primary and secondary sources<br>• create a comprehensive and organized presentation with a clear sequencing of ideas and transitions<br>• make a well-reasoned, insightful presentation supported by related details |
| 2.3 use effective delivery | • vary tone, pitch, and pace of speech to create effect and aid communication<br>• project voice well<br>• use logic, arguments, or appeals to persuade others<br>• use good posture and eye contact<br>• skillfully use facial expression, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood appropriate to the audience and message |
| 2.4 use effective language and style | • speak using standard grammar<br>• use a variety of sentence structures<br>• use language that is interesting and well suited to the topic and audience<br>• develop effective voice for the audience and purpose |
| 2.5 effectively use action, sound, and/or images to support presentations | • communicate messages through oral, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation<br>• demonstrate sophisticated use of available technology to present ideas and concepts |

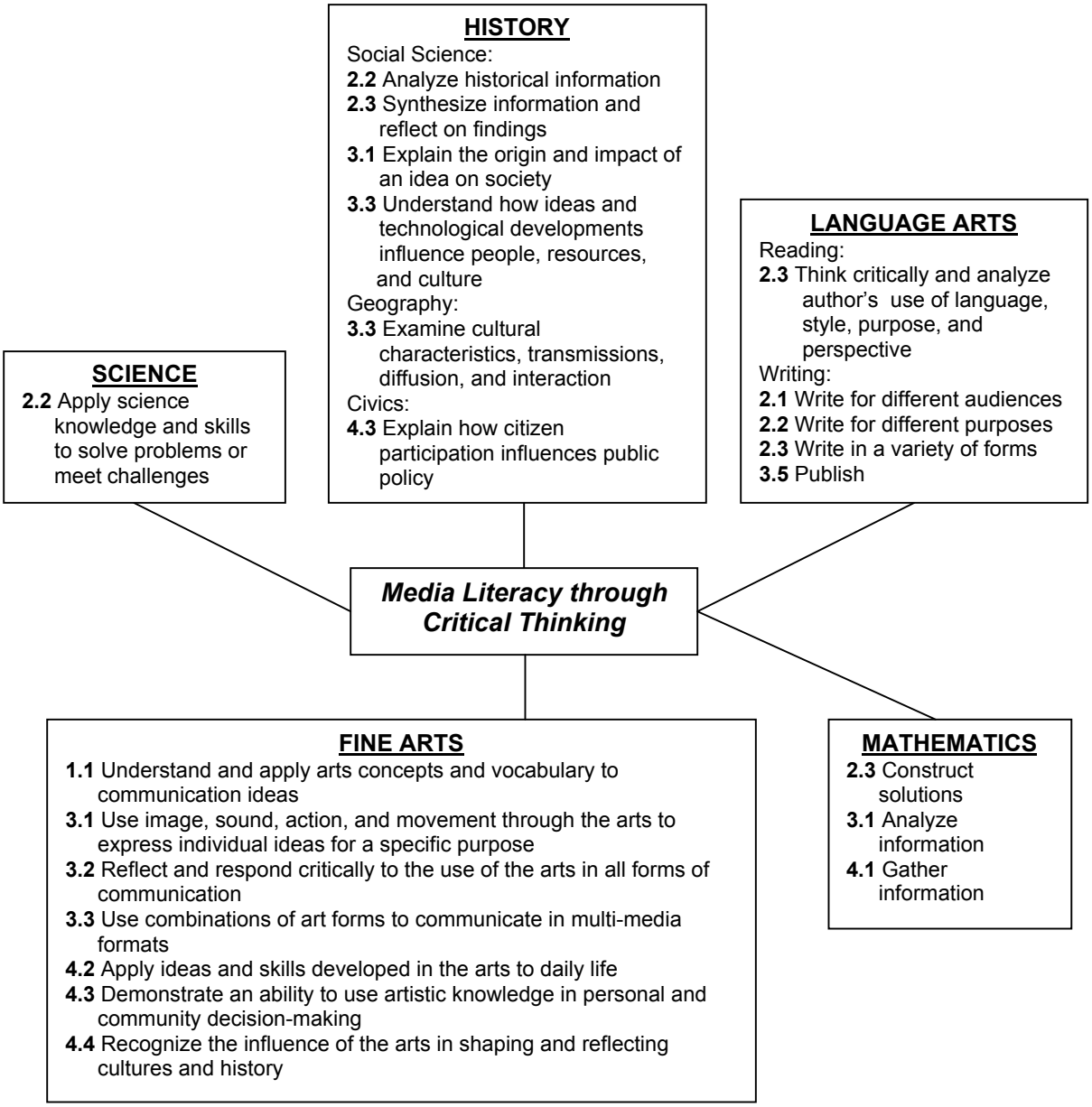
**Essential Academic Learning Requirement 3: The student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others. To meet this standard, the student will:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 3.1 use language to interact effectively and responsibly with others | • use language to influence others, *for example, to persuade, convince, correct, or disagree*<br>• use appropriate humor, slang, idioms, and conventional styles with both peers and adults<br>• use language that is accurate and equitable<br>• show awareness of cultural premises, assumptions, and world views in order to effectively communicate cross-culturally |
| 3.2 work cooperatively as a member of a group | • participate in a group to write, work toward consensus, propose solutions, or achieve results<br>• make individual contribution to the group and extend the contribution of others<br>• encourage group members to offer ideas and points of view |
| 3.3 seek agreement and solutions through discussion | • respect that a solution may require honoring other points of view<br>• analyze group interaction to anticipate consequences<br>• accept accountability for group results<br>• advocate, implement, and evaluate a plan<br>• influence by encouraging and supporting others to act independently |

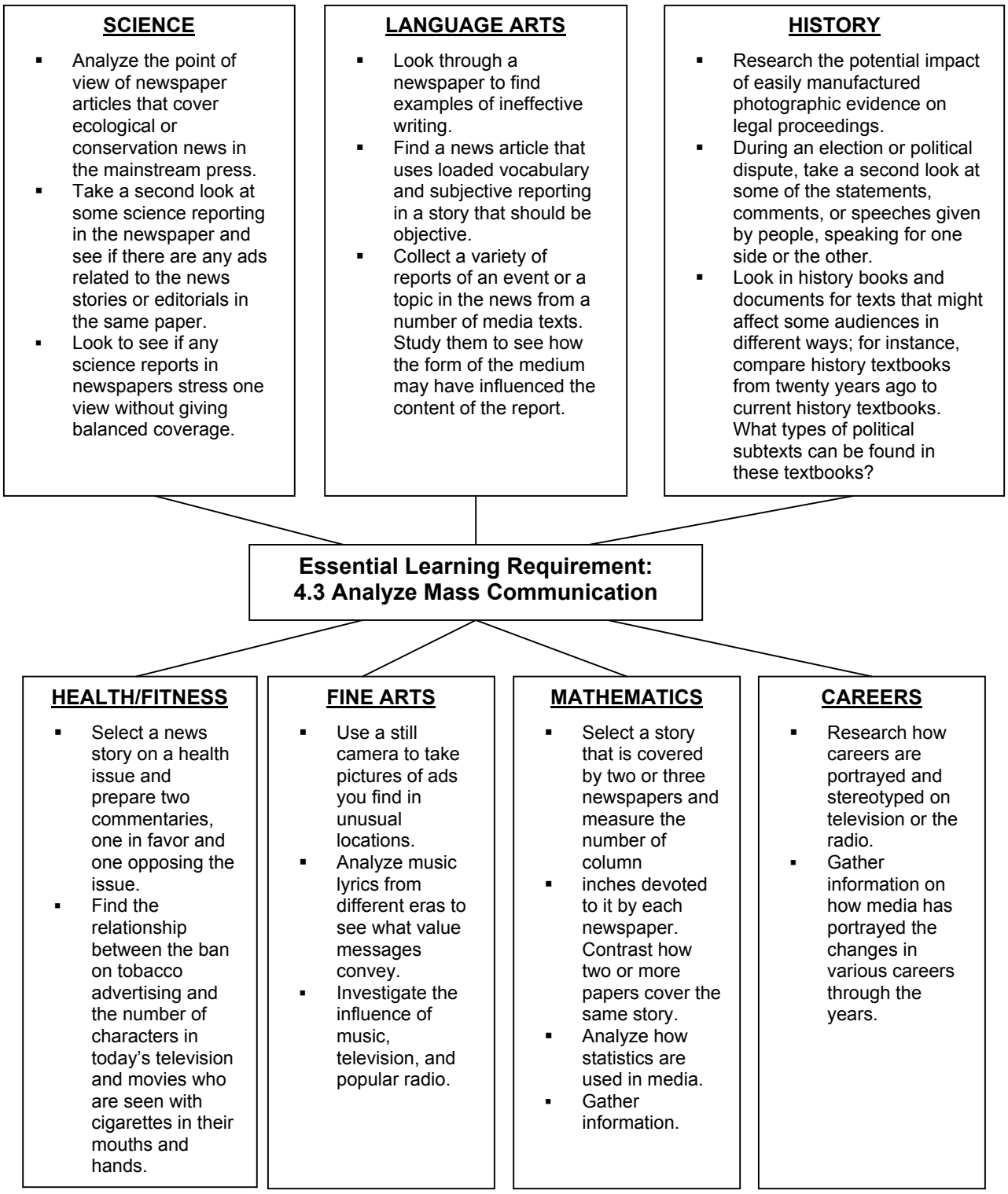
**Essential Academic Learning Requirement 4: The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of formal and informal communication. To meet this standard, the student will:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 4.1 assess strengths and need for improvement | • defend choices to deviate from established criteria<br>• use one's own and established criteria to improve presentation<br>• assess own strengths and weaknesses as a presenter |
| 4.2 seek and offer feedback | • independently offer specific feedback on others' presentations with regard to design, delivery skills, work choice, and conventions<br>• seek, evaluate, accept, and apply feedback |
| 4.3 analyze mass communications | • identify and evaluate complex techniques used in mass communications such as *generalization, appeal to popularity, and appeal to emotion*<br>• analyze and explain the effectiveness of methods used in mass communication<br>• analyze and interpret the influence of media sources |

## How *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* Connects to Content-Area Essential Academic Learning Requirements



## Suggestions for Incorporating the Study of Media into the Content Areas



## Suggested Organization for Teachers

There are as many routes into media education as there are learners. Your personal preference might be to begin with a survey of student media consumption in which the class:

- tallies the time it spends in the company of mass communication texts
- lists and justifies its favorites
- calculates the amount of money it spends on different forms of mass communication
- estimates how much it is influenced by mass communication

Whatever introduction you choose, you should find the materials in this manual useful in systematizing your understanding of how media texts work, and how students can learn about them.

While it probably makes good sense to begin the topic of *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* with the materials on *Taking a Second Look*, and while composing a personal response is a lot easier than composing an analytical response and should be done first - there is still plenty of leeway for teachers and students to plot their own journey through the media education materials.

It would be wise, but not absolutely necessary, to study the Five Key Concepts in order. Some teachers might prefer to introduce the work on analytical response before they have finished studying all the key concepts. Such modifications to the material could enhance your class' experience.

Another modification you might wish to make to the sections is to add some texts of your own choosing; or even to substitute locally chosen texts for the ones currently presented in the materials.

Much of the work that students are asked to do in this curriculum engages them in group and oral activities. Occasionally they are asked to write, but generally writing does not form an important component of the learning and assessment. Naturally, teachers are free to make modifications to this emphasis according to the needs and learning styles of their students. In some cases it may be necessary to eliminate writing altogether, and in others writing might need to be more heavily emphasized.

Group work is deliberately varied throughout the materials to include work in pairs, and different sized small groups. Teachers will clearly want to modify these requirements for working in groups according to their specialized knowledge of the students in their class.

### A Note On the Importance of Updating Media Texts:

Media are about today. The materials in this manual are taken from the time when the material was written. The author was tempted to use texts dating back to Tiananmen Square, the Gulf war, the Bosnian war, the California earthquake during the 1991 World Series, the bomb attack during the Atlanta Olympics - but all these events took place at a time that is outside the experience of our students. Except for a few timeless texts, such as the "take a second look" drawings, almost all texts here are contemporary—at least contemporary to the time when the materials were first written.

The problem again is that these texts will also become dated, as cohorts of students pass through our classrooms, looking ever younger and younger. One solution is for teachers to try to develop the habit of clipping and filing up-to-date materials that can take the place of or supplement the

ones in this manual. Another is to have students perform this clipping and filing task as part of their media education, developing each year a file of new materials exemplifying the principles of media education.

Some teachers make a habit at the beginning of the year of asking colleagues and students to bring unwanted magazines, newspapers, etc. to school to make a collection of material that can become a continuously updated supply of grist for the media education mill.

## Media Literacy Terminology

Throughout *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*, some terms will be used in ways that should be made clear to students from the beginning.

**Media** The term **media** means more than just the traditional mass communication of the press, the broadcasting industries, and film. It is used here to include communications like the Internet, the telephone, product-packaging, advertising, and even fashion, cosmetics, and graffiti. A medium (the singular form of "media") is a way of communicating meaning within a culture.

**Text** A **text** communicates a message. A photograph is a text, and so is a message or graphic on a T-shirt. A campaign button worn on a lapel is just as much a text as is a newspaper editorial. A billboard on the highway is a text. The use of the word *text* is not restricted to the printed word.

**Subtext** In literature study, teachers are used to referring to the ***theme*** or the ***underlying meaning*** of a book, play, story, or poem. This concept of a meaning ***beneath*** the obvious meaning of the words in a text, or ***sub-text***, is transferable to all media texts. At one level a pair of blue jeans is a practical garment; at another level it can be a social statement.

**Audience** All groups or individuals who receive a media message or perceive a media text are referred to as the audience.

NOTE: A good resource for terminology is The Language of Media Literacy: A Glossary of Terms, which can be found at the Media Awareness Network website: www.media-awareness.ca.

# Introduction

Essential Academic Learning Requirements: 1.2 Listen and Observe to Gain and Interpret Information, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

The concepts in the student workbook are perhaps new to many students.

- They may not be familiar with the concept that communications that are not broadcast, recorded, or printed can be called media.
- They may not understand that the word *mass* in mass communications does not refer strictly to the size of the audience.
- They may not have considered that anything that communicates can be called a text.

You can help them understand these concepts by asking the students to review the list of media given on the first page of their introduction, and check which ones qualify as mass.

Another activity might be to ask the students to check out the classroom environment for texts (such as wall signs, board work, clothing with labels and messages printed on them, etc.) that students might not have previously recognized as texts.

Students are provided with a *Graphic Overview of Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* (SW p.2), which shows a "big picture" of the progression and application of the concepts and skills that will be learned throughout this manual. Teachers may wish to share the graphic organizer and even enlarge it so that students may discuss it further.

Student materials also introduce the major concepts that will be introduced in this manual. The explanation for each concept is given in language that the students should be able to understand. For further explanation, you might wish to refer back to the previous pages of this introduction.

- Below is the address for the Canadian Web site, The Media Awareness Network, one of the best available worldwide for media education resources. Link to it frequently to find lesson plans, discussions and news of what other media teachers are doing: http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm

- The address below takes you to the Media Literacy Clearing House, and its encyclopedic listings of all the media literacy resources available on the web: http://www.oitgrvl.k12.sc.us/gcms/Home%20Page/professional_links.htm

The following *Student Contract* for a media education program may also be a helpful classroom tool.

| Student contract for media education program | |
|---|---|
| **Student name:** | |
| **Class:** | **Date:** |
| **Teacher:** | |
| **The above-named student agrees to stand by the terms of this contract during the program on media education.** | |
| | **ASSESSMENT** |
| **EQUIPMENT**:<br>I will treat all equipment with care and respect, and will ensure that others do the same. I will schedule my use of media equipment carefully. | |
| **GROUP WORK**:<br>I will actively take part in group work and collaborate with other to the best of my ability. | |
| **RESPECT FOR OTHERS**:<br>I will always show respect for others and for their views and opinions. I will challenge views and opinions in a way that asks for more information rather than with confrontation. I will be open to new ideas. | |
| **RESPONSIBLE USE OF MEDIA:**<br>I will respect the boundaries set by the teacher for the kinds of media texts that are suitable for study and discussion in this program. | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

# Taking a Second Look

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 1.2 Listen and Observe to Gain and Interpret Information, 3.1 Use Language to Interact Effectively and Responsibly with Others, 3.3 Seek Agreement and Solutions through Discussion, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

Taking a second look means probing more deeply into a text in search of new meanings or interpretations. It is important to make it clear that the expression ***look*** is used metaphorically in academic terms—it means ***finding subtexts.***

Some students may need more time than others to find the images. Occasionally a student may need to have the alternative image physically outlined before seeing it. Students may work in groups of two or three in assisting each other to find the image. At this point, the teacher can check for understanding, making sure that students understand the concepts of ***text*** and ***taking a second look.***

The first image in the student workbook for *Taking a Second Look* is an image of either a young man wearing a cap and a high-collared jacket or (by turning the image upside down) of an older man with a cap hanging over the right side of his face.

After students record their first look / second look for this image and several other examples, have a discussion about the political cartoon (SW p.10). Students may need some background information on the point of the cartoon.

Now that students are beginning to understand the importance of taking a second look, they are prepared to do the last exercise in their workbook (SW p.11). This exercise has students locate three media texts and explain what they noticed in their first looks and their second looks.

### Extension Activities:

Civics:
During an election or political dispute, take a second look at some of the statements, comments or speeches given by people speaking for one side or the other. What does a second look reveal?

Drama:
Take a second look at some TV dramas to look past the story to see how well the actors are practicing their craft.

Language:
Take a second look at the newspaper to find examples of weak writing.

Science:
Take a second look at some science reporting in the newspaper.

- Is any of it related to ads that appear somewhere else in the same paper?
- Does any of the reporting stress one view on a science topic (e.g. pollution) without giving a balanced coverage?

**Resources:**
Particularly good examples of visuals that require a second look are the artworks of M.C. Escher, whose many creations are renowned for their trompe l'oeil effects. A site featuring his work can be found at http://www.cs.unc.edu/~davemc/Pic/Escher/.

Also requiring a second look is the artwork of Ron Francis, which can be viewed along with written commentaries, at this website: http://users.senet.com.au/~rfrancis/oils.htm

For more optical illusions to use as examples of how to take a second look, try this website: www.optillusions.com.

# Media Texts Have Purposes and Target Audiences

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 2.2 Develop Content and Ideas, 2.4 Use Effective Language and Style, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication

Last Updated 2000.

If there is a difficult concept in this section it is what is meant by the word ***purpose.*** Some students may be puzzled that we should even ask the question. For them, perhaps, media simply are and do not need justifying.

Make it clear that the question of media purpose is not one of justification – not a challenge to the existence of any media. Explain instead that the question of purpose is an inquiry into what the text is trying to achieve – to do.

Next is an exercise that encourages students to consider the various purposes (both broad and specific) of media texts as well as find examples of media texts to match given purposes (SW p.15). The exercise also encourages students to consider the effects of the target audience on the purpose of a media text.

**Reminder:**
It would be a good idea for teachers to bring sample texts for students when doing these activities so that students have a wide range of texts to examine.

**Extension Activity:**
As an extension activity, have students form small groups in which are to discuss the texts that they themselves create.

- phone calls
- text messages
- greeting cards
- emails and letters
- conversations
- answering machine messages
- notes on the fridge door
- school work
- music
- photographs
- videos
- clothing and fashion
- jewelry and accessories
- makeup and hairstyles

# Key Concept #1:
# All media are carefully wrapped packages.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements: 2.2 Develop Content and Ideas, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication

Last updated 2000.

These student materials begin the study of the five key concepts in *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking.* All of the activities in the five key concepts can be done individually or in groups. Students who have difficulty working alone can be partnered with another student to help improve the process. Students can be encouraged to bring in media texts that they find outside of the classroom which apply to any of the key concepts.

Some students may claim that Key Concept #1 is very obvious and that they already know all about cameras and microphones and the like. It is one thing to know how a camera works and another to use that knowledge to ask a question about a television news item, such as why has the camera operator chosen to shoot this person from such a low angle? It makes the person look very overwhelming and threatening. Why would the camera operator want to create that impression about this person?

In the activity, "Unwrapping the Package," students are introduced to the idea that media are constructed on an obvious level (SW p.22). As students examine various newspapers, they will notice the obvious constructions. Students may offer a variety of answers. Possible answers:

Q: What construction elements on the front page tell me what is intended to be looked at first?
**A: headlines, pictures, top of page, first story below the fold, extra-wide column**

Q: What are the construction elements on the front page that are intended to encourage me to open the paper and look at other pages?
**A: index, promos for other sections, stories that continue on other pages, references to related articles in another section**

Q: Why might some newspapers use more pictures and color in their front pages than other newspapers?
**A: different kinds of construction (color; pictures) appeal to different kinds of readers**

For the last/bottom, it may be helpful for the teacher to get several copies of newspapers that contain color pictures, such as *USA Today*, as well as some that do not, such as the *Wall Street Journal*.

Also, it would be helpful to have copies of other newspapers' front pages so that students have a variety of texts to examine.

Teachers can extend these activities by encouraging students to think of texts from other media than print. Begin by asking them to comment on the way that TV Soap Operas and news programs are constructed, and go on to ask them to deconstruct shows like *Entertainment Tonight*, *Survivor*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, etc. Use magazines, radio and videogames as other media to explore this way.

After “Unwrapping the Package,” the workbook introduces the concept that media texts are also constructed on a subtle level. An activity gives students practice spotting media techniques and their target audiences (SW p.23). Answers may vary.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| All the smart people shop at… | popular appeal | intelligent, educated audience, those who want to be considered smart |
| You don’t need an expert to tell you that this is a wise decision. | just plain folk | audiences who may not have expertise in the area, general population |
| Cy Young award winner eats at Joe’s Diner | celebrity endorsement | audiences who want to imitate or admire celebrities |
| You, too, can look like supermodel Jane Doe if you buy… | identification | audiences who want to imitate or admire celebrities |
| For a better chance at the big prize, get your lottery tickets here. | false logic | audiences who like to take chances |
| Cute puppies attract crowds at city park | appeal to emotion | audiences who have pets or enjoy animals |
| Crime in mall has citizens terrified | appeal to emotion | audiences who are concerned with safety and community |
| Get with it! Buy one now. | popular appeal | audiences who wish to be “in” |

Another activity (SW p.25) requires students choose two texts of their own and identify the purposes, the techniques, and the target audiences of each of the texts. Remind students of the importance of appropriate content as they search for texts on the Internet and billboards or in magazines and newspapers for this activity.

In subsequent activities, students are asked to choose their own sample texts and find examples of how they are constructed.

The following website can be used to extend this section to a study of propaganda techniques: www.freerepublic.com.

**Extension Activities:**

- Have students start a class collection of obviously constructed texts of all kinds. Set aside a display area in the classroom for them. Participants can pin up the texts together with a short written explanation of how each is constructed.

- Have students make a visit to a shopping mall and inspect it as if it were a media text. How are malls "constructed?” Students can take some photographs or video pictures to illustrate his/her report back to the class. NOTE: You often need to get permission to take pictures in a mall.

- Hold a class discussion or debate on whether professional sports games are better if you see them "live" at the stadium, or if you watch them on TV. Be sure to include in your discussion the way that the different forms of the sport experience influence the content. For example, explain how baseball on TV is different from going to the game as a spectator.

**Cross curricular connections:**
Family studies, cosmetology:
Students can look in magazines, especially fashion magazines, to find images and other texts that make female faces and figures into constructions. They should examine the way models are placed in fashion and beauty ads and try to replicate some of the images by making drama tableaux to illustrate how unreal some of the texts really are.

Science:
Make a list of science shows on TV, or of science magazines. Compare the content of one of those TV shows or magazines to the content of a typical science textbook chapter. How are they different? How are they similar? How does the form influence the content?

**Assessment:**
After each unit, participants will be asked to fill out a chart as a way of making notes on their understanding of the key concept they have just been studying. For the section they have just covered, use the page entitled, *Charting Key Concept #1* (SW p.31).

In the first column is the name or title of the text. Next to it students are to write in an example from the text that illustrates the key concept. In the third column - the really important column - students write down their explanation of why the example they have picked fits the key concept. This is where students "make" their point, by explaining exactly how the example and the concept are connected.

In this first chart, one row has been filled out for an example for students to follow in their own work.

**Note:**
To review the progress made by the class thus far in the 5 key concepts of media education, see the *Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts* in the Appendix (TM p.60).

# Key Concept #2:
# Media construct versions of reality.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 2.2 Develop Content and Ideas, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

Students who have been present at an event (a concert, a sports event, an accident scene) and then later have seen or read about the event in the media may be able to explain this key concept very clearly for their peers. They will be able to talk about the difference between the experience itself and the version of the experience portrayed in the media text. They will be able to convince their peers that what the media texts show us is not reality but only a version of it.

Because of the length of this section for this key concept, feel free to pick and choose the media texts you would like to discuss.

You might similarly find that students want to tell stories like those in the student workbook for Key Concept #2, such as *The Camera Always Lies* (SW p.33), to validate their understanding of this key concept. Students may want to spend a few minutes talking with one or two other students about their understanding of the text.

Since students are often up to date on the latest in computer technology, the article entitled *Woman of the 90s: A Cyber Fantasy* (SW p.34), reflecting how technology contributes to constructing versions of reality, may interest them. As a follow-up, the chart following the stories asks students to identify the main idea of the articles, the author's point of view, as well as how the articles relate to this key concept.

After deconstructing the hamburger ad (SW p.36), students will enjoy telling about other ads they know which present an unreal version of the product advertised. You can briefly discuss how the text illustrates the words "construct," "reality," and "versions." Students can suggest other texts that they know that do a similar job for other products. For instance, children's toy ads are notorious for constructing a version of the real toy that is very different from the actual experience of the toy itself.

Have a discussion with students asking them why the media texts of the advertising/reality burgers and the fake snow image are good examples of the second key concept: the media construct versions of reality.

### Extension Activities:

Have the class make a bulletin board display to show texts they have collected to illustrate the second key concept: the media construct versions of reality. Students should try to find texts that present different versions of the same event and post them together, with an accompanying set of notes pointing out how they are different (e.g. two different newspapers reporting on a political meeting).

## Cross Curricular Connections:

Civics/law:
Ask: What could happen in courts of law if photographic evidence such as the pictures in *Seeing is no longer believing when computers alter images,* and *Woman of the 90s: A Cyber Fantasy* can so easily be manufactured?

Technology:
Ask: What might be the next step in digital picture making? What other ideas might be made old-fashioned soon?

## Assessment:

Students should use each of the texts in this unit to complete the activity entitled, *Charting Key Concept #2* (SW p.38).

## Note:

To review the progress made by the class thus far in the 5 key concepts of media education, see the *Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts* in the Appendix (TM p.60).

# Key Concept #3:
# Media are interpreted through individual lenses.

Essential Academic Learning Requirement for Washington State: 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

You may find that you have to offer some students extra help or examples as they come to grips with the difficult concepts in this section:

- Understanding the special meaning of the word ***negotiate*** as in the expression, ***negotiate meaning in a text***
- Understanding what we mean when we say audiences ***bring information*** to the text as well as ***take information*** from it

The first illustration in the student workbook presents students with a text about tobacco (SW p.40). The concepts behind the text will be familiar to the students, yet some may interpret the text differently. The activity asks for students to give feedback on how they negotiated the meaning of the text. It is important to emphasize to students that there is no real right or wrong answer. Each person brings a different understanding of the meaning of a text.

There are probably many interpretations of the cartoon, but two stories usually surface:

- The story about the wolf who tried to blow over a house but could not because cigarette smoking had left him (or her) short of breath. In disgust, the wolf walks off throwing a pack of cigarettes away with a gesture that suggests he or she will quit smoking.
- The story is the ending of the nursery rhyme of the three little pigs and the big, bad wolf. The wolf is at the last of the three houses, the house made of bricks, and he fails to blow the house down, when he had succeeded in blowing down the two previous houses made of straw and sticks. The wolf, unable to accept defeat, blames his cigarette smoking habit for the failure, and stalks off in disgust, throwing away his cigarette package.

The second of the two possible interpretations depends on information that the audience provides. People who are not familiar with the story of the three little pigs do not bring their experience of the story to the text, and therefore they may not negotiate the same meaning from the text as other audiences who know the story.

A classroom discussion may be interesting here because it will show the students how others understood the meaning of the same text. In addition, students may find they know of other examples of texts that may be negotiated in different ways.

The next media text in the student workbook, the billboard cartoon (SW p.41), gives an opportunity for students to negotiate the meaning of the text with different audiences. At this point, you may wish to review taking a second look, audience and purpose, and key concepts #1 and #2.

The next activity has students examine the cartoon through different audience roles (SW p.42). Have students draw from a hat or box a role to play. After they have drawn a role, have students complete the table corresponding table (SW p.43).

### Extension Activity:
Ask students who understand the concept of negotiating meaning to role-play the two parts of a person who is trying to come to terms with the text. Each part of the person wants to see the text in a different way, and they talk to each other, or negotiate, to decide which interpretation is better. If you wish, you can add a third player into this role-play, one who represents the text.

Possible scenarios:

- Some popular songs make references that young people understand but older people miss altogether.
- People from another culture are familiar with traditional stories that people from our own country do not know at all.

Have students who have understood the concept of bringing information to a text find other examples of texts that rely on an audience's prior knowledge.

### Extension Activity:
Students can explore audience theory in action

- by looking at the way advertisements and all media are targeted at specific groups or audiences
- by examining that relatively new spate of TV advertisements for prescription drugs
- by examining magazine ranks and determining how each magazine is aimed at a specific audience
- by looking through TV listings and estimating the target audience for a number of programs
- by looking at specialty TV channels and estimating the target audience for each

Have students locate a text that they think audiences might negotiate in different ways, and bring it to class for a session of audience challenge. (All texts must be cleared with the teacher in advance.) In class, students can take turns presenting their text to the class, and analyzing the different "meanings" the varied audience finds in it.

### Cross Curricular Connections:
History:
Have students look in history books and documents for texts that might cause some audiences to react in different ways. For instance, some older accounts of the Indian wars will give offense to modern Native people. Some modern representations of Arab people might offend people of Arab ancestry. You may wish to suggest that students look up the word "bias," and connect it to key concept # 3.

### Assessment:
Have students fill out the chart entitled, *Charting Key Concept #3* (SW p.46).

### Note:
To review the progress made by the class thus far in the 5 key concepts of media education, see the *Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts* in the Appendix (TM p.60).

**Resources:**
For more information on audience and audience theory, you may wish to visit the following websites.

For activities for students:
http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/mediamag/audtheo3.html

For more information for teachers who are interested in learning about audience:
http://www.litnotes.co.uk/audtheory.htm

# Key Concept #4:
# Media are about money.

Essential Academic Learning Requirement for Washington State: 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

For the first exercise (SW p.47), take an inventory of the items of advertising the students find in the classroom. For now, avoid discussions of the ethical issues related to the ads in the classroom. Put that aside to return to in the next key concept: Media promote agenda. Make sure that students do not miss items like:

- the small manufacturer name tabs on jeans
- the name of the publisher on books
- the photograph of the author on the book cover of books, with a list of other books by the same author
- the multiple ads to be found on running and sports shoes
- ads to be found on hats, pins, badges, T-shirts, etc.

The next section in their workbooks asks students to consider the various channels and means that society uses to convey advertisements. Students can work in groups to explore different issues such as:

- What is the meaning of the expression "conflict of interest?"
- What happens when a television news show wants to do a strong story about tobacco companies when the same company owns other companies that advertise heavily on the same network?
- If television and radio are filled with material that appeals to the largest possible audience, where do people who have other tastes find their preferences in television and radio?

One subsequent activity asks students to look more closely at the parts of a newspaper as related to Key Concept #4 (SW p.49). It is important to keep the focus of the activity on the monetary motives behind the placement of sections, the monetary importance of including travel, car, business, entertainment sections, etc.

The last pages of this section of the student workbook further explain the practice of product placement. Product placement is a practice whereby commercial products are given prominent display in movies or television shows. Sometimes you will note that a television series always features one make of cars. In another, the central character is always drinking a certain soft drink in every episode that is held up to the camera for viewers to read the label. Sometimes a rental truck is seen in traffic in several shots of a movie with its easily recognizable name crossing the screen like an ad. Sometimes a corporate identity dominates an entire film, as in the Tom Hanks film*, Castaway*.

**Extension Activities:**

- Students can collect examples of product placement from television and movies and record them on a chart explaining the effects of product placement.

- Another topic for study of this key concept is media ownership. Not too many years ago television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines all had separate owners. Now it is not unusual for the same individual or corporation to own many media businesses in the same geographic area or market. A single owner of media outlets in one area can have a tremendous impact upon the audiences in that area, and, because of the commercial nature of mass media, a tremendous impact upon businesses and commercial activity. Since the media generate wealth, single ownership funnels that wealth in a single direction. To keep up-to-date on who owns what in to today's media, explore http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/.

- Have students explore the Internet to find out about a fifth media conglomerate, VIACOM, and make a presentation to the class describing VIACOM's media and entertainment holdings. For information, see www.viacom.com.

**Cross Curricular Connections:**

Visual Arts:

- Have students use a still camera to take pictures of ads they find in unusual locations. Students can create a montage of their pictures.
- Have students research the work of artists who have used the style of advertising in their work (Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist).

**Assessment:**

Have participants fill out the chart entitled, *Charting Key Concept #4* (SW p.52).

**Note:**

To review the progress made by the class thus far in the 5 key concepts of media education, see the *Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts* in the Appendix (TM p.60).

# Key Concept #5:
# Media promote agenda.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 2.2 Development Content and Ideas, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

The first activity in the student workbook for Key Concept #5 involves critical viewing and deconstruction of a Tommy ad for ideological and value messages.

Before discussing the media text from *Vogue* (SW p.56), it may be helpful to discuss the era in which the photo was taken (1940s). This discussion may help students better understand this key concept. The questions regarding the *Vogue* image guide students through the process of analyzing this text as it relates to Key Concepts #5 as well as skills discussed in the earlier key concepts.

The *Far Side* cartoon (SW p.58) is an example of political satire. Students might benefit from examining the nature of satire as an extension of this activity. The cartoon can also be connected to Key Concept #3.

When the cartoon is viewed as a social text, it is making a point about the way families in neighborhoods try to keep up with each other by competing to be the first family on the block to have a new item. This is a ***social*** point.

When the cartoon is viewed as a political text, it is making a point about how nations try to keep up with each other. By comparing the behavior of nations to the behavior of families keeping up with their neighbors, the cartoon makes a point about the politics of the nuclear arms race. This is a ***political*** point. People who do not bring this text knowledge of the arms race may not get the point of the cartoon.

The media text showing the two children (SW p.60) is used to emphasize Key Concept #5, but students should also consider how Key Concepts 1- 4 also relate to the media text. The chart at the end of the workbook, used to analyze the image, could be adapted to other texts you use in the class. Below are some possible answers:

| | |
|---|---|
| Key Concept #1 | The boy and the girl, the lighting coming through the trees, the angle of the camera. |
| Key Concept #2 | This creates a fake reality. It is of a constructed reality, not a real situation. |
| Key Concept #3 | There are different interpretations that can be taken. One interpretation could be that the children are in danger because of the dark foreground. Another, that the children are walking towards safety because of the light in front of them. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Key Concept #4 | This key concept is not strongly supported with examples from the text. |

**Extension Activity:**
Have students search through local newspapers and magazines for other cartoons that have social and/or political messages, and write a short explanation of how these cartoons relate to Key Concept #5.

**Assessment:**
Have students fill out the page entitled, *Charting Key Concept #5* (SW p.62).

**Note:**
To review the progress made by the class thus far in the 5 key concepts of media education, see the *Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts* in the Appendix (TM p.60).

**Some Additional Comments for Students and Teachers on Key Concept #5:**
Media students are encouraged to exercise a broad range of critical and analytical skills, not just one set. In short, media teachers should not believe in teaching polemics. Media students are taught how to discover the ideological and political messages (agenda) that reside within *all* media messages. Media teachers believe that students should become adept at identifying political and ideological bias of all stripes *wherever* they encounter it.

Good media education courses do not focus on propagandizing students into a single way of thinking. They provide students with a broad base of critical and analytical skills to help them make their own choices and decisions about the ideological and political messages surrounding them in 21st-century culture, whether it be *Survivor* or *Masterpiece Theater, The New York Times* or *USA Today*, *Vogue* or *Readers' Digest*. Media education teachers focus on respecting students' choices and decisions, provided those choices and decisions are well formed and properly supported.

# Personal Response to a Media Text

Many students have difficulty expressing a response to text of any kind. They sometimes get stuck at the level of "I like it," or "I don't like it," and justify their opinion with circular logic such as "because it is great," or "because it sucks."

Clearly this is not enough when it comes to learning how to express a response to text either in a personal or a critical mode.

It is easier for students to learn the steps of justification of response working from a personal standpoint where the rules allow that any properly supported opinion has some validity.

Teachers might want to begin by asking students general questions about their favorite TV shows, and asking students in teams to explain *why* these shows are their favorites. Any student who can justify an opinion by giving a clear example and explaining exactly how the example justifies the opinion stated can earn a point for his or her team.

Hold a final discussion analyzing the process of making an argument in support of a point of view, and of the importance of:

1. A clear statement of the point being made
2. A clear and concrete example related to the point being made
3. A clear explanation of how and why the example is related to the point under discussion

For example:

1. "I like *NYPD Blue* because the camera work is different from most other shows, and that makes it more interesting."
2. "There's a good example in the opening credits where the camera moves fast around New York streets and the editing cuts quickly from one scene to another, just giving you glimpses of scenes before cutting right to another one."
3. "Most ordinary shows just use regular camera work with long shot, medium shot and close up. Nothing jerky or fast paced. And I have seen so much of that kind of camera work and editing that I now find it boring, and I prefer the *NYPD Blue* style."

After working through an exercise like this, classes might be ready to use the student workbook for Personal Response to a Media Text.

The examples on the film *Titanic* (SW p.64-5) can be used to illustrate the principles of personal response, and groups of students can be asked to replicate the *Titanic* chart using another, more recent, popular film.

# Rubric for Assessing Personal Response

**LEVEL 5**

The student integrates personal feelings, experiences, hopes fears, reflections or beliefs with the text. The personal response is rooted in the text and a clear understanding of the whole text, and its subtext(s), and makes connections to other texts.

**LEVEL 4**

The student connects personal feelings, experiences, hopes, fears, reflections or beliefs with the text. The personal response refers to the text, conveys a sense of understanding of the text and partial understanding of its subtext.

**LEVEL 3**

The student explores personal feelings, experiences, hopes, fears, reflections or beliefs and makes a superficial or concrete connection to the text.

**LEVEL 2**

The student retells or paraphrases the text or identifies devices in isolation making only a superficial reference to personal feelings or experiences. Or the student writes about personal feelings, etc., without connecting to or referring to the text.

**LEVEL 1**

The student response shows little or no interaction with or understanding of the text.

**LEVEL 0**

The student response is irrelevant or incomprehensible.

# Practice Analyzing, Interpreting, and Evaluating Media Texts

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 2.2 Develop Content and Ideas, 2.3 Use Effective Delivery, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

An analytical response asks the students to use the concepts they have learned to carefully examine a media text (SW p.67). These details can include connections to any of the purposes and target audiences; as well as any of the five key concepts.

When preparing an analytical response, students are instructed to complete the following steps:

1. Examine the media text.
2. Take a second look at it (and a third and fourth, if necessary).
3. Complete the chart on the Analytical Response Sheet by looking for evidence of the text's purpose, target audience, and connections to at least three key concepts.
4. Use the evidence to make connections or interpretations to the applicable key concepts.
5. Write an evaluative statement that addresses the following question:

   ***How effective is this text in delivering the message to the target audience? Explain by using evidence from the text to support your evaluation.***

Students are asked to study media text, the ad for the West Seattle Street Festival (SW p.68), and then to examine two students' analytical responses. The first student's response is developed in much more detail than you would expect from any one student. Explain that the example is intended to show everything that could possibly be included in a response, but that students will be expected in their own responses to concentrate on two or three key concepts and a single purpose. The second student's response is one that does not provide a complete and thorough analytical response.

Students can use the blank *Analytical Response Sheet* (SW p.74) to do their own analytical responses.

For an additional set of sample responses, have students review the *Example of Analytical Response to a Media Text: Shane* (SW p.75-9).

It is important for students to read the text several times so they have a clear understanding of it. Students may also work in groups to assist each other in their first attempts at composing analytical responses.

# Final Project

Essential Academic Learning Requirements for Washington State: 2.2 Develop Content and Ideas, 4.3 Analyze Mass Communication Last Updated 2000.

At this point, students are introduced to a project in which they will apply all the skills and concepts they have learned so far.

The project is for students to present analytical responses to media texts through visual and oral presentations. The presentation should be clear and concise in illustrating how the key concepts, purposes, and techniques apply to the text.

It is important for the students to remember that they should choose a text that targets their age group. The students will be asked to explain how the text targets their age group.

Students should constantly be defining and redefining the work they do as they develop their analytical responses. As they are going through this process, they may discover more and more links between their media texts and the key concepts, media purposes, and target audiences.

Students are given a step-by-step process for their projects (SW p.80-1).

The remaining pages of this section provide students with additional tools they can use to make sure they are developing complete and thorough presentations.

The following *Final Project Checklist* (TM p. 42-3) can be used to help students through the process as they develop their final assessment projects. A column has been included to remind students of due dates for the various stages. Teachers are reminded to review this checklist periodically to ensure that students are on schedule with their projects.

For a case study of a media project that maps students' critical insight, see *An Investigation into Levels of Critical Insight in 16+ yrs.-old Students*, in the Appendix (TM p. 57-9).

# Final Project Checklist

| Step | Due Date | Checklist/Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| Step 1: Research and Selection Process (EALR 4.3) | | ▪ I have explored a variety of media texts to choose the best text for analysis.<br>▪ I have examined the following types of media texts:<br><br>▪ My media text:<br>o is appropriate for presentation to my class<br>o illustrates purpose, target audience, and three key concepts |
| Step 2: Gathering Information (EALR 4.2) | | ▪ I have collected information from the media text and completed the chart on the Analytical Response Sheet<br>▪ I have completed a skeletal plan for my presentation. I have addressed issues such as:<br>o describing the purpose of and the target audience for my presentation,<br>o describing my media text,<br>o explaining how I will do my visual presentation<br>o explaining why my media text is appropriate for my age group, and<br>o considering demographics and cultural issues of the age group when choosing my media text. |

# Final Project Checklist
## (cont'd)

| Step | Due Date | Checklist/Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| Step 3: Developing Your Presentation (EALR 2.2, 4.3) | | ▪ I have created an oral presentation that clearly and concisely displays the connections between my media text, its target audience, purpose, and connections with key concepts.<br>▪ I have created a visual presentation of my media text that is visually appealing.<br>▪ My visual aid has:<br>o a layout that is attractive, effective, and appropriate. It has good use of easy-on-the-eye white space.<br>o key ideas that stand out by using variations in font and style.<br>o graphics (illustrations, charts, and graphs), when needed, to help the reader interpret data and draw conclusions.<br>o text that is carefully edited and free of errors.<br>▪ I have done a self-review of my analysis of my media text, checking for thoroughness of the connections made to the text.<br>▪ I have done a self-review of my visual and oral presentation, checking that it covers all aspects of a complete presentation (e.g., audience, organization, delivery).<br>▪ I have rehearsed my oral presentation and implemented revisions.<br>▪ I have used the scoring criteria to be sure I have all the necessary details in completing a quality presentation. |
| Step 4: Peer Review and Revision (EALR 4.2) | | ▪ I have scheduled a peer-to-peer conference.<br>▪ I have rehearsed my oral presentation for my peers and implemented any feedback and suggestions. |
| Step 5: Delivering Your Presentation (EALR 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 4.2) | | ▪ I have given my presentation.<br>▪ I have received teacher and peer evaluation for my presentation.<br>▪ I have done a self-assessment and set goals for future presentations. |

# Assessment Tools

*Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* provides the teacher with opportunities to give students feedback on their progress. Students may use the charts and forms provided to help them (and their teacher) monitor their progress in learning of various concepts and skills. Because nobody knows the students in the class as well as the teacher, it is important that the materials be adapted and modified to meet the needs of individual classes and students.

**An Assessment Primer:**

There are three kinds of assessment: student assessment, program assessment, and system assessment.

1. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Why is it important to assess?

- To find out what the students know (knowledge)
- To find out what the students can do and how well they can do it (skill; performance)
- To find out how students go about the task of doing their work (process)
- To find out how students feel about their work (motivation, effort)

What are the functions of assessment?

- Diagnostic: tells us what the student needs to learn
- Formative: tells us how well the student is doing as work progresses
- Summative: tells us how well the student did at the end of a unit/task

What should we assess?

- Student work at all stages of development but particularly at the end
- Student process
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Development of sophistication and complexity in student work

How should we assess?

- Day to day observation
- Tests and quizzes
- Rubrics
- Rating scales
- Project work
- Portfolio

` Who should be involved in assessment?

- The teacher
- The student
- The student's peers

- Parents

What should we do with the information from our assessment?

- Use it to improve the focus of teaching and learning (diagnosis)
- Use it to focus student attention on strengths and weaknesses (motivation)
- Use it to improve program planning (program assessment)
- Use it for evaluation, decision-making and reporting to parents

## 2. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Why is it important?

- Program assessment leads to program improvement.
- Teachers need to have continuous information that their program is delivering what it sets out to deliver. Assessment data can confirm a program or point out where it is not meeting its objectives.
- Program planning ought not to take place without building in a place for program assessment.

What are the functions?

- To keep the program focused on success
- To indicate areas where extra instructional emphasis is needed
- To help teachers pinpoint successful and unsuccessful approaches and pedagogies

What should we assess?

- The focus of the program on its stated aims and outcomes
- The degree to which students succeed in meeting the expectations of the program (agglomerations of student assessment)

How should we assess?

- Third party observation (teacher buddy, building administrator, resource person, outside consultant)
- Self administered questionnaire
- Analysis of student results
- Interviews with students, teachers, parents
- Survey of community levels of satisfaction
- Survey of student and teacher portfolios

What should we do with the information from the assessment?

- Turn it into program improvements

## 3. SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

System assessment is like program assessment except that it is applied on a larger scale. A program assessment might take in only a single classroom, but a system assessment can take in an entire school district or even larger area of organization. System assessment nearly always involves the use of third party consultants.

One kind of system assessment that teachers might be involved in is the assessment of the implementation of a curriculum across several classrooms or schools. This could be initiated by the teachers themselves to see how they are doing as a team, or it could be initiated from outside as a supervisory measure. In either case the purpose is to assure accountability.

Grass-roots accountability initiatives are much preferable to external initiatives, for obvious reasons.

### The Differences Between Assessment and Evaluation

| Assessment | Evaluation |
|---|---|
| Assessment is the gathering of information about something (like student performance) | Evaluation is the act of setting a value on the assessment information |
| Assessment is information | Evaluation is a judgment |
| Assessment is qualitative | Evaluation is quantitative |
| Assessment pinpoints specific strengths and weaknesses | Evaluation ranks and sorts individuals within groups |
| Assessment is diagnostic and formative, as well as summative | Evaluation is summative |
| Assessment is most useful to teachers and students | Evaluation is most useful to administrators, politicians and parents |
| Assessment focuses on the individual student | Evaluation focuses on the group |
| Assessment is an educational measure | Evaluation is a political/administrative measure |
| Assessment is referenced by criterion | Evaluation is referenced by norm |

### Peer Evaluation:

The teacher will notice that the following *Peer Evaluation for Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* (TM p.47-9) looks identical to the *Scoring Criteria* (SM p.84) in the student workbook. The intention is that students become familiar with the scoring criteria the teacher will use to assess their final presentations.

After each portion of their peer evaluation, comments can be written to help the students revise to improve their final presentations.

Students may also use this peer evaluation form for doing self-evaluations as well.

### Content of Presentation Scoring Guide:

Some teachers may wish to assess only the content portion of the presentation (including the visual aid). All of these scoring criteria are given on the *Content of Presentation Scoring Guide* (TM p.50), so that teachers have that option.

**Analytic Scoring Guide:**
This rubric is for the final presentation of the student's projects. *The Analytic Scoring Guide* (TM p.51-3) includes the content portion of the final project as well as the oral presentation portion.

## Peer Evaluation for *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking*

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Content of Presentation** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Suitable Text | ▪ Highly Suitable and lends itself to analysis clearly | ▪ Only partly suitable; does not lend itself to analysis | ▪ Inappropriate or unsuitable; it does not lend itself to analysis | **Score:** |
| Quality of Analysis | ▪ Provides clear, perceptive and insightful analysis<br>▪ Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Provides adequate support | ▪ Provides simple analysis<br>▪ Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Provides less than adequate support | ▪ Analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>▪ Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>▪ Provides little or no support | **Score:** |
| Comments | | | | |

# Peer Evaluation for *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking* (cont'd)

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Oral Presentation** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Audience | ▪ Makes insightful and intelligent connections between own purpose and audience interest and needs | ▪ Makes general connections between own purposes and audience interest and needs | ▪ Makes minimal or no connection between own purposes and audience interest and needs | **Score:** |
| Organization | ▪ Create a fully detailed, well-developed presentation<br>▪ Effectively uses an interesting introduction, well-developed ideas, appropriate transitions, and strong conclusion | ▪ Creates a partially complete presentation with some supporting details<br>▪ Somewhat organized with a general sequencing of ideas and some transitions | ▪ Creates an incomplete presentation with minimal or no supporting details<br>▪ Unorganized presentation with minimal or no logic of ideas | **Score:** |
| Delivery | ▪ Appropriately varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech to enhance communication<br>▪ Consistently and skillfully uses facial expression, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | ▪ Somewhat varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech to create minimal effect to aid communication<br>▪ Uses some facial expressions, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | ▪ Little or no variety in tone, pitch, and pace of speech<br>▪ Minimal or no use of facial expressions, body movements, and gestures to convey tone and mood | **Score:** |
| Language | ▪ Consistently uses varied language that is interesting and appropriate to the topic and the audience<br>▪ Develops effective voice for the audience and purpose | ▪ Occasionally uses language that is interesting and well-situated to the topic and audience<br>▪ Occasionally uses effective voice for the audience and purpose | ▪ Little or no use of language or voice that is interesting and suited to the topic or the audience | **Score:** |
| Comments | | | | |

# Peer Evaluation for *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking* (cont'd)

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Visual Presentation of Text** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Quality Analysis of Text | ▪ Visual aid provides clear, perceptive, and insightful analysis<br>▪ Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Connections are accurate and clear | ▪ Visual aid provides simple analysis<br>▪ Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Connections are sometimes accurate and clear | ▪ Visual aid analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>▪ Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>▪ Connections are largely inappropriate; explanations may be irrelevant | **Score:** |
| Format, Layout, and Conventions | ▪ Visual aid is eye-catching<br>▪ Effectively employs layout, graphics, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>▪ Creatively and effectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | ▪ Visual aid is ordinary and adequate<br>▪ Occasionally employs effective layout, graphs, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>▪ Adequately communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | ▪ Visual aid is unoriginal<br>▪ Has ineffective layout, graphs, and visual devices which may detract from the presentation<br>▪ Ineffectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation to present ideas and concepts | **Score:** |
| Comments | | | | |

# Content of Presentation Scoring Guide

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Content of Presentation** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Suitable Text | ▪ Highly suitable and lends itself clearly to analysis | ▪ Only partly suitable; does not lend itself to analysis | ▪ Inappropriate or unsuitable; it does not lend itself to analysis | **Score:** |
| Quality of Analysis | ▪ Provides clear, perceptive and insightful analysis<br>▪ Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Provides adequate support | ▪ Provides simple analysis<br>▪ Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Provides less than adequate support | ▪ Analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>▪ Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>▪ Provides little or no support | **Score:** |
| **Visual Presentation of Text** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Quality Analysis of Text | ▪ Visual aid provides clear, perceptive, and insightful analysis<br>▪ Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Connections are accurate and clear | ▪ Visual aid provides simple analysis<br>▪ Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>▪ Connections are sometimes accurate and clear | ▪ Visual aid analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>▪ Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>▪ Connections are largely inappropriate; explanations may be irrelevant | **Score:** |
| Format, Layout, and Conventions | ▪ Visual aid is eye-catching<br>▪ Effectively employs layout, graphics, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>▪ Creatively and effectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | ▪ Visual aid is ordinary and adequate Occasionally employs effective layout, graphs, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>▪ Adequately communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | ▪ Visual aid is unoriginal<br>▪ Has ineffective layout, graphs, and visual devices which may detract from the presentation<br>▪ Ineffectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation to present ideas and concepts | **Score:** |

**Total Score: _____**

# Analytic Scoring Guide

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Content of Presentation** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Suitable Text | • Highly suitable and lends itself clearly to analysis | • Only partly suitable; does not lend itself to analysis | • Inappropriate or unsuitable; it does not lend itself to analysis | **Score:** |
| Quality of Analysis | • Provides clear, perceptive and insightful analysis<br>• Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>• Provides adequate support | • Provides simple analysis<br>• Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>• Provides less than adequate support | • Analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>• Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>• Provides little or no support | **Score:** |

# Analytic Scoring Guide
## (cont'd)

| Oral Presentation | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audience | • Makes insightful and intelligent connections between own purpose and audience interest and needs | • Makes general connections between own purposes and audience interest and needs | • Makes minimal or no connection between own purposes and audience interest and needs | **Score:** |
| Organization | • Create a fully detailed, well-developed presentation<br>• Effectively uses an interesting introduction, well-developed ideas, appropriate transitions, and strong conclusion | • Creates a partially complete presentation with some supporting details<br>• Somewhat organized with a general sequencing of ideas and some transitions | • Creates an incomplete presentation with minimal or no supporting details<br>• Unorganized presentation with minimal or no logic of ideas | **Score:** |
| Delivery | • Appropriately varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech to enhance communication<br>• Consistently and skillfully uses facial expression, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | • Somewhat varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech to create minimal effect to aid communication<br>• Uses some facial expressions, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | • Little or no variety in tone, pitch, and pace of speech<br>• Minimal or no use of facial expressions, body movements, and gestures to convey tone and mood | **Score:** |
| Language | • Consistently uses varied language that is interesting and appropriate to the topic and the audience<br>• Develops effective voice for the audience and purpose | • Occasionally uses language that is interesting and well-situated to the topic and audience<br>• Occasionally uses effective voice for the audience and purpose | • Little or no use of language or voice that is interesting and suited to the topic or the audience | **Score:** |

# Analytic Scoring Guide
## (cont'd)

| **Element** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Visual Presentation of Text** | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Quality Analysis of Text | • Visual aid provides clear, perceptive, and insightful analysis<br>• Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose<br>• Connections are accurate and clear | • Visual aid provides simple analysis<br>• Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose<br>• Connections are sometimes accurate and clear | • Visual aid analysis is unclear and ambiguous<br>• Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose<br>• Connections are largely inappropriate; explanations may be irrelevant | **Score:** |
| Format, Layout, and Conventions | • Visual aid is eye-catching<br>• Effectively employs layout, graphics, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>• Creatively and effectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | • Visual aid is ordinary and adequate<br>• Occasionally employs effective layout, graphs, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing<br>• Adequately communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | • Visual aid is unoriginal<br>• Has ineffective layout, graphs, and visual devices which may detract from the presentation<br>• Ineffectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation to present ideas and concepts | **Score:** |

**Total Score: _____**

# Appendix

## The Eight Key Concepts of Media Education

1. **All media are constructs.**
   Media messages are carefully put together by their creators. Often the messages are constructed with enormous effort and expense, even though to the audience they appear quite natural. Motion pictures, for instance, are the products of careful manipulation of such constructive elements as:

   - Photography
   - Sound
   - Lighting
   - Costume
   - Script
   - Direction
   - Acting
   - Special effects

   Students of mass communication need to develop the skills of looking beneath the surface of media messages to see how they are constructed. This skill is sometimes called "deconstruction."

2. **The media construct versions of reality**.
   Audiences tend to accept media texts as natural versions of events and ideas, when, in fact, they are only representations of events and ideas. The reality we see in media texts is a constructed reality, built for us by the people who made the media text. Students of mass communication need to develop skills of interpreting texts so that they can tell the difference between reality and textual versions of reality.

3. **Audiences negotiate meaning in media**.
   Audiences interact with media texts in idiosyncratic ways. Some audiences accept some messages totally at face value. Other audiences may reject the same text, disagree with its message or find it objectionable. Yet other audiences, not certain if they have embraced or rejected the text, will try to come to terms with it by negotiating. Audiences who negotiate with a text might ask questions, seek out other people's opinions, or try different interpretations or reactions the way people try on new clothes, to see how they suit the wearer. Students of mass communication need to be open to multiple interpretations of texts, and aware that reaction to a text is a product of both the text itself and all that the audience brings to the text in terms of its accumulated experience of life.

4. **Media have commercial implications.**

   - One of the chief purposes of most media is to promote consumerism. While we enjoy many of the products of media, such as magazines, we need to be aware that some media texts are created to deliver an audience to advertisers rather than to deliver texts to audiences.

- With increasing regularity, four or five massive communications conglomerates dominate media production facilities like newspaper/book/magazine publishers and TV/film production and distribution companies. Mass communications students need to be aware of the implications of the media's commercial agenda.

5. **Media contain ideological and value messages.**
   The very fact that some people object to some media texts is evidence that those texts contain value messages. Most feature films promote what is called *The Hollywood Dream,* in which love conquers all. Some newspapers and magazines are targeted at a small audience that can be identified by its values or ideology (belief system). Detecting the ideological and values agenda of media texts is an important skill in mass communication analysis.

6. **Media have social and political implications.**
   As successful famine-relief campaigns by popular musicians have proven, mass communication can be a powerful influence for social action and change. The realms of social and political influence can be observed overlapping during election campaigns, although such everyday texts as TV documentaries on the environment are political as well as informational. Detecting the social and political implications of media texts is an important skill in mass communication analysis.

7. **Form and content are closely related in the media.**
   Sometimes our perception of an event or an issue is influenced by the media. People who read different newspapers form different impressions about the same news stories. People who take their knowledge of history from feature films will have a different impression of past events than those who study original documents. The student skilled in mass communication analysis understands how content and form are connected.

8. **Each medium has its own unique aesthetic form.**
   Mass communication is the source of incalculable enjoyment and entertainment. Analysis of mass communication texts should enhance students' ability to enjoy and be entertained as they grow in understanding of how media texts work.

(Adapted from *Media Literacy Resource Document*, the Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto, 1989)

## Media Education: Eighteen Basic Principles

Len Masterman is one of the leading thinkers in the international media education movement. His book, *Teaching the Media* (Comedia Books, 1985), is considered the definitive text for K-12 teachers on the subject. The Council of Europe Press published Mr. Masterman's new book, *Media Education in Europe in the 1990s*.

1. Media Education is a serious and significant endeavor. At stake in it is the empowerment of majorities and the strengthening of society's democratic structures.
2. The central unifying concept of Media Education is that of representation.
3. The media mediate. They do not reflect reality but re-present it. The media, that is, are symbolic or sign systems. Without this principle no media education is possible. From it, all else flows.

4. Media Education is a lifelong process. High student motivation, therefore, must become a primary objective.
5. Media Education aims to foster not simply critical intelligence, but critical autonomy.
6. Media Education is investigative. It does not seek to impose specific cultural values.
7. Media Education is topical and opportunistic. It seeks to illuminate the life-situations of the learners. In doing so it may place the "here-and-now" in the context of wider historic and ideological issues.
8. Media Education's key concepts are analytical tools rather than an alternative content. Content, in Media Education, is a means to an end. That end is the development of transferable analytical tools rather than an alternative content.
9. The effectiveness of Media Education can be evaluated by just two criteria: the ability of students to apply their critical thinking to new situations, and the amount of commitment and motivation displayed by students.
10. Ideally, evaluation in Media Education means student self-evaluation, both formative and summative.
11. Media Education attempts to change the relationship between teacher and taught by offering both objects for reflection and dialogue.
12. Media Education carries out its investigations via dialogue rather than discussion.
13. Media Education is essentially active and participatory, fostering the development of more open and democratic pedagogies. It encourages students to take more responsibility for and control over their own learning, to engage in joint planning of the syllabus, and to take longer-term perspectives on their own learning. In short, Media Education is as much about new ways of working as it is about the introduction of a new subject area.
14. Media Education involves collaborative learning. It is group focused. It assumes that individual learning is enhanced not through competition but through access to the insights and resources of the whole group.
15. Media Education consists of both practical criticism and critical practice. It affirms the primacy of cultural criticism over cultural reproduction.
16. Media Education is a holistic process. Ideally it means forging relationships with parents, media professionals and teacher-colleagues.
17. Media Education is committed to the principle of continuous change. It must develop in tandem with a continuously changing reality.
18. Underpinning Media Education is a distinctive epistemology. Existing knowledge is not simply transmitted by teachers or "discovered" by students. It is not an end but a beginning. It is the subject of critical investigation and dialogue out of which new knowledge is actively created by students and teachers.

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# An Investigation into Levels of Critical Insight in 16+ yrs.-old Students

**By Chris M. Worsnop, based on the Research of Dr. Alexander Fedorov, Taganrog Pedagogical Institute, Russia.**

KEY WORDS:

Critical analysis
Assessment
Pedagogy
Classroom practice
Questioning
Feature films

This paper describes a project based on the work of Prof. Alexander Fedorov of Taganrog Pedagogical Institute, Russia.

After screening a feature film, Fedorov analyzed the talk of 16 year-old students to reveal discrete levels of critical insight in four areas: plot, character and author, synthesis.

With Fedorov's collaboration, I developed a scale to reflect his observations.

| | Plot (tabula) | Character (persona) | Author (creator) | Synthesis (adjudicator) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High level | Sees the story as one component of the author's, actor's & other artists' work. Expands comprehension by connecting story to themes, universal mythological patterns & other works. | Understands the complexity of performance & psychology of characterization. Comprehends how performances complement other components of the work. Expands comprehension by connecting characters and performances to models in other works. | Identifies with/points out the concrete & conceptual work of the media author(s). Editing, script, lighting, sound, camera placement/ movement, composition, ideology. Expands comprehension by perceiving the interaction of the various artistic components of the work & by connecting to other works by this & other authors. | Views the work as a united and integrated whole. Is aware of & can articulate excellences, gaps, excesses & deficiencies. Cites sources to substantiate conclusions. Makes predictions based on multiple & integrated insights of the oeuvre. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Middle level | Understands the story, its development & syntax. | Identifies with character(s)—their psychology, motives, actions—as heroic figures. | Understands (some) separate components of the authoring arts, & may make occasional connections among them | Can state & support personal preferences informally. Can make judgments based on knowledge of genre and/or the body of work of an actor or an individual artist (e.g., Steven Spielberg) Predicts outcomes based on insights/patterns of plot and character. |
| Low level | May not follow the entire narrative thread, but naively focus on fragments or episodes as the principal focus/ purpose of the work. Makes little distinction between representation and reality. | Sees (one or a small selection of) characters in two-dimensional terms. | Is very marginally aware of some aspects of the author's art (e.g., special effects, sound). | May refer to other works in simple comparison. Makes predictions based on simple plot conventions.<br><br>© 2000,<br>Chris M. Worsnop<br>Alexander Fedorov |

The eventual purpose of the scale is as an assessment instrument and teaching guide for classroom use. Both Fedorov and I validated the scale by using it to analyze the talk of further classes of students.

The methodology we used was to screen a common film (Roman Polanski's *Frantic*) and to interview students subsequently, following a common procedure.

The 20-minute interviews of groups of ten students were divided into three parts.

- Part 1 was unstructured. The interviewer used general questions such as, "What do you have to say about this film?", "Does anyone else have anything to say?"
- Part 2 used more leading questions such as, "What was the best part of the film? Why?", "What questions does the film lead you to ask?"
- Part 3 used focused, Socratic questions such as, "Describe the relationship between two characters," "What lighting effect did the author use, and why?"

The interviewer frequently asked, "How did you know that?" to encourage metacognition.

The interviews were videotaped, and the tapes transcribed for analysis. The scale above was used to assign a level (high, middle, low) and realm (plot, character, author, synthesis) to each student utterance.

Analysis showed very few students operating at the highest level, and most high-level responses occurring in the third round of questioning.

The conclusion was that the scale was successful in analyzing students' levels of critical insight. However, the analysis revealed questions, and issues for later exploration:

- Learning style: How does the analysis illuminate varying student learning styles?
- Scaffolding: How does the analysis reflect the way students build their learning based on their own previous attempts, the teacher's intervention, or the comments of other students?
- Air time: What is the significance of the teacher, one student or a small group of students dominating the time and verbal "space" in a class discussion?
- Social practices: To what extent is the lack of spontaneous response (part 1) determined socially?

Colleagues in Canada, USA, Russia, the UK and Australia are being recruited for a second round of investigation. Inquiries from any interested teachers are welcome. worsnop@pathcom.com

## Sample Chart: Connecting Media Texts to the Five Key Concepts

| KEY CONCEPT | EXPLANATION | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| **All media are carefully wrapped packages** | A popular song recording that sounds natural and spontaneous may have been recorded 20 times and constructed out of parts of each of the 20 different performances.<br>Sometimes our perception of an issue or story is influenced by the medium we got it from. We may have a different view of a trial we have only read about than other people who may have seen parts of it on TV. The form of the medium has influenced the way we interpret the content. | You may believe you have seen many famous battles and historical scenes because you have seen them depicted in TV and film, but in truth what you have seen is only a re-presentation and a re-construction of someone's idea of what those events were like. Even in a news report, what you see is restricted by the camera frame and the decisions of the editor, and influenced by the words (and music) chosen to accompany the pictures. |
| **Media construct versions of reality** | Two different newspapers may give the same news story a very different slant. Each story constructs a different version of the reality of the story for its readers. Many readers only ever read one version. | A British Colombian newspaper might tell a different story about Pacific coast salmon fishing than a newspaper from Washington State |
| **Media are interpreted through individual lenses** | Each individual in an audience brings a different set of life experiences to each media text. Our reactions are a mixture of what we take from a text and what we bring to it. This process of blending the text with our own life experience to make a personal interpretation of the text (meaning) is called "negotiation" of meaning.<br>When all is said and done, the media are wonderful sources of pleasure. We enjoy them. Students of media should continue to enjoy media even in the process of approaching media with critical awareness. | A person who has been a victim of a crime might have difficulty watching a police show on TV (E.g. *NYPD Blue*) because that person brings a different experience to viewing the show than someone who has not been a victim.<br>Some people carry a paperback with them everywhere because they love to read. Others wear a personal headset so that they can hear their favorite music. Many families have multiple TVs in their homes so that no family member needs to miss their favorite show. We all love the media - and there's nothing wrong with that. (In moderation) |
| **Media are about money** | One of the chief purposes of media is to promote consumerism - even if it is only consumption of media.<br>Media companies are businesses, whose aim is to make profit. | When CNN promotes a Warner movie, or a Time/Life publication, viewers should be aware that the companies all belong to the same conglomerate. |
| **Media promote agenda** | Almost every media text proclaims its own values through its story, its characters, its language, and its attitudes.<br>We are often blind to ideologies and values that are close to our own - we call these "natural" - but quick to notice values and ideologies we do not like.<br>Some texts go even further and become propaganda for specific ideas about society and politics. | A show like *Little House on the Prairie* owed its popularity partly to the fact that it presented and promoted a clear set of values. The films of Quentin Tarantino do the same thing, but the values are vastly different.<br>At election times the media carry many messages that are political. Some are commercials for political parties or candidates, but some are editorials, documentaries or news stories, deliberately slanted to support a political view. Sometimes the "movie of the week" is a 90-minute commercial about a social issue such as spousal abuse or homelessness. |